

GIL GUTKNECHT
1ST DISTRICT, MINNESOTA



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2301

November 12, 1999

An open letter to Janet Krueger, IBM Employee Benefits Action Coalition:

It has become obvious that some members of the leadership of IEBAC are more interested in promoting a partisan political agenda than they are in working constructively toward a legislative solution to the IBM pension issue. Two recent actions make it clear that your organization is being hijacked as a vehicle for partisan attacks.

First, I am appalled that your web site (www.cashpensions.com) lists me as one of the "legislators who need education" and includes an icon which alleges that I "gave special support contrary to employee interests" or have "done nothing of note." Any fair-minded person who considers what I have done—and the actions of those who were listed on your "honor roll"—would conclude that your characterization of my record is patently false and misleading. For example:

- I wrote IBM Chairman Louis Gerstner on July 22, asking that the pension changes be reconsidered. I followed up with a September 16 letter urging that a **choice** of either the old pension plan or the cash balance plan be given to **all** employees, not just those over 40 years of age with 10 or more years of service.
- On August 13, I wrote to Chairwoman Ida Castro of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission asking for an investigation of whether the IBM conversion violated federal laws against age discrimination.
- On September 25, you participated in a town meeting I held that was attended by more than 150 IBMers on this issue. At that meeting, I said I would press for House hearings on the pension issue. I also had testimony included in the record of the Senate's pension hearings, stressing my support for full disclosure and choice for all employees.
- On October 19, I wrote to Rep. Rick Lazio, the author of the House minimum wage increase bill, expressing my concern about the bill's pension provisions. I stated my position that we need to have hearings on pension reforms, and that the pension language in H.R. 3081 may reduce pension protections.
- I and my staff have worked diligently on this issue. We have participated in meetings with IEBAC every time we've been asked.

The above actions—specifically holding a town meeting and writing letters to Mr. Gerstner or various government agencies—are among those listed as criteria for an "honor roll" designation on your web site. You commend at least 8 of my colleagues based **solely** on a single letter to the EEOC or the Department of Labor. Reasonable people will ask whether some members of the IEBAC leadership have a partisan agenda that runs counter to the interests of all IBM employees. I believe most want a constructive solution, and my record shows I am on their side. Copies of my correspondence are enclosed.

The IEBAC leadership's decision to insert a declared candidate against Sen. Grams on the agenda for your November 16 meeting in Rochester raised serious concerns that it was being turned into a political rally instead of an educational and policy discussion. Those concerns were confirmed beyond a reasonable doubt when I learned today that you have decided to also include one of my previous and now again declared political opponents. I therefore have no choice but to reconsider my decision to send my staff representative, retired IBMer Dick Larson, to participate in what is obviously shaping up to be a partisan political rally.

I am disturbed that for the sake of political opportunism you would undermine our efforts to find a legislative solution. I was elected to represent nearly 6,000 IBM employees and their families, and my record shows that I take their concerns very seriously. I am planning another public meeting with any IBM employees who are interested in a problem-solving policy discussion. If IEBAC continues along this path of partisan attacks, you will harm IBM employees. It will be that much more difficult to achieve a consensus solution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Gil", written over the printed name.

Gil Gutknecht
U.S. Representative